WELL-ARMED GUNMAN SHOOTS 1 AT CHEEKTOWAGA STORE | PAGE B1

THE BUFFALO NEWS

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Evander Kane

SABRES LOSE ON QUICK GOAL IN OT

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Lloyd Taco opens second site Friday

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Region's private colleges are struggling to fill seats

Sharon Cantillon/Buffalo News file photo

Canisius College last month decided to lower its 2018-19 tuition price to compete with the state's Excelsior program.

Some plan dramatic steps to compete with free tuition

BY JAY TOKASZ
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

Overall enrollment at area colleges and universities remained flat in 2017, with half of four-year institutions showing small gains in the size of their student populations and the other half reporting declines.

But the number of students enrolled at four-year colleges and universities in Western New York went down by more than 3,000 people from five years ago, a Buffalo News analysis has found. Just four of the 16 institutions experienced growth between fall of 2013 and fall of 2017. And three institutions – Canisius College, SUNY Buffalo State and Houghton College – now have the fewest students on their campuses in more than 30 years.

"Excelsior is here to stay, and we need to do something to kind of break through and to get the attention of prospective students."
Canisius President John J. Hurley

New York State's new free tuition program – implemented this past May, after most students had decided on a school – did not appear to steer many students away from private institutions and into public ones this fall. But private colleges are bracing for that possibility in 2018, when the application process for the next round of free tuition Excelsior Scholarships coincides with admissions and financial aid cycles.

More than 22,000 students received

See **Colleges** on Page A10

Inside: *SEE WHICH AREA SCHOOLS GREW OR SHRANK BETWEEN 2013-17. PAGE A10*

Budget director for Trump blames N.Y. for its tax woe

Defends plan to curb SALT deduction against criticism by Cuomo, Schumer

BY JERRY ZREMSKI
NEWS WASHINGTON BUREAU CHIEF

Getty Images file photo

"Is it the federal government's fault that New York taxes are so high?" OMB chief Mick Mulvaney asks.

WASHINGTON – President Trump's budget director offered a spirited defense Tuesday of a tax-overhaul proposal that would curtail the deduction for state and local taxes, acknowledging that it could do the most damage to high-tax states such as New York.

But states such as New York should take responsibility for their own high tax rates – and stop making taxpayers in places such as his home state of South Carolina subsidize them through a break in the federal tax code, said Mick Mulvaney, director of the Office of Management and Budget, or OMB.

Asked about New York Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo's view that cutting the deduction, known as SALT, could hurt wealthier taxpayers so much that they would leave the state – and leave remaining New Yorkers paying higher taxes – Mulvaney responded:

"Whose fault is that? ... Is it the federal government's fault that New York taxes are so high that they're driving people out of the state?"

Noting that high-state taxes have already prompted people to leave New York, Mulvaney added: "I don't think it's up to the federal government to save New York from its bad decisions."

Mulvaney's comments drew a harsh rebuke from Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer, D-N.Y.

"Sadly, Mr. Mulvaney is using backward logic and fake math to try to hide the fact that the scheme he is promoting will raise taxes on so many middle-class New Yorkers, deflate housing values and lavish unwarranted rewards on the wealthiest Americans and large corporations," Schumer said.

Mulvaney spent a significant share of his 45-minute session with regional journalists fending off questions by report-

Inside: *SESSIONS CHANGES HIS ACCOUNT OF DEALINGS WITH RUSSIA. PAGE A6*

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Trump's push for Clinton probe raises red flags

Pressure on Justice Dept. defies presidential norms

BY PETER BAKER
NEW YORK TIMES

Getty Images

Trump and Clinton at debate Sept. 26, 2016. As president, he has reiterated his campaign call for her to be investigated.

WASHINGTON – President Trump did not need to send a memo or telephone his attorney general to make his desires known. He broadcast them for all the world to see on Twitter. The instruction was clear: The Justice Department should investigate his defeated opponent from last year's campaign.

However they were delivered, Trump's demands have ricocheted through the halls of the Justice Department, where Attorney General Jeff Sessions has now ordered career prosecutors to evaluate various accusations against Hillary Clinton and report back on whether a special counsel should be appointed to investigate her and the Clinton Foundation.

Sessions insists that any such decision would be made on a "factual basis," and in soliciting the assessment of department lawyers, he may be seeking a way out of the bind that his boss has put

See **Trump** on Page A6

Lake Ontario shoreline is declared disaster area

Trump OKs funds for flood recovery

BY JERRY ZREMSKI AND THOMAS J. PROHASKA
NEWS STAFF REPORTERS

President Trump on Tuesday declared Lake Ontario's New York shoreline a disaster area, opening up federal funding for recovery efforts from flooding that occurred between May 2 and Aug. 6.

State, local and tribal governments, as well as some nonprofit groups, will be eligible to apply for federal money for emergency work and the repair or replacement of facilities damaged by flooding in Niagara, Orleans, Oswego, Wayne, St. Lawrence and Jefferson counties.

Also under the president's declaration, the state is eligible for federal funding on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation efforts.

However, the disaster declaration, issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, said the region's application to allow individuals to apply for assistance remains under review.

The disaster declaration was good news not just for the region's municipalities, but also for Rep. Chris Collins, R-Clarence, who has been pressing for the federal aid for months.

"We have witnessed awful devastation along the shoreline and have stayed persistent in our fight to secure federal assistance," Collins said. "My

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